

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 /073 W
-----032659 121703Z /53

R 092136Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBWSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6814
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A MANAGUA 2661

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CS, NU, PINS, PGOV
SUBJECT: PROBABLE DISTURBANCES RELATED TO RETURN OF THE 12

REF: MANAGUA 2565

SUMMARY: THE ANNOUNCED INTENTION OF THE GROUP OF NICARAGUANS KNOWN AS THE 12 TO RETURN TO NICARAGUA FROM COSTA RICA WILL LIKELY TRIGGER SIGNIFICANT DISTURBANCES. ALTHOUGH THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE NOT RECOGNIZED POLITICAL LEADERS, THEY REPRESENT A RALLYING POINT FOR ANTI-GON ACTIVISTS INCLUDING THE FSLN. END SUMMARY

1. NICARAGUAN POLITICAL CIRCLES HAVE BEEN ABUZZ WITH SPECULATION ABOUT THE ANNOUNCED INTENTION OF THE RETURN OF THE 12 (REFTEL). THE GON HAS ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO ARREST THEM BASED ON AN OUTSTANDING INDICTMENT WHICH RESULTS FROM CHARGES OF THEIR HAVING FOMENTED SUBVERSION. EVEN THOUGH NONE OF THE GROUP ARE RECOGNIZED POLITICAL LEADERS, THEY ARE FOR THE MOST PART, WELL RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR PAST RELIGIOUS, BUSINESS, OR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES. THEIR POLITICAL PROMINENCE COMES FROM THEIR CALL FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION
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OF THE FSLN IN A NEW NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO REPLACE SOMOZA.

2. THE POTENTIAL FOR SIGNIFICANT DISTURBANCES BEGINS AT THE TIME OF THEIR RETURN WHEN ANTI-GON ACTIVISTS PROBABLY LARGELY STUDENTS, WOMEN, AND SOME WORKERS AND POLITICANS) ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEMPT TO GENERATE A MASS RECEPTION COMMITTEE AT THE AIRPORT (IF THIS IS HOW THEY RETURN.) A RECEPTION COMMITTEE HAS ALREADY BEEN ESTABLISHED.

LARGE CROWDS COULD EXPLODE INTO A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION WITH THE GN.

3. APART FROM WHETHER THERE IS CONFRONTATION AT THE TIME OF THEIR RETURN, IF THE 12 ARE JAILED AS THE GON SAYS WILL HAPPEN, EMB WOULD EXPECT ANTI-GON ACTIVISTS TO STAGE PROTEST RALLIES, OCCUPY SCHOOLS, AND OTHER PROMINENT BUILDINGS AND CONDUCT STREET DEMONSTRATIONS. SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS WILL PUT THESE CIVILIANS ON A PROBABLE COLLISION COURSE WITH THE GN.

4. BECAUSE OF THE 12'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ACTIVIST TERCERARIO FACTION OF THE FSLN, WHICH HAS LONG BEEN RUMORED READY TO LAUNCH NEW ATTACKS IN NICARAGUA, EMB WOULD EXPECT THE FSLN TO HAVE PLANS TO ATTACK GN UNITS AND GARRISONS AT THE TIME OF MAXIMUM CIVIL DISTURBANCES. FAILURE TO DO SO WOULD INDICATE SIGNIFICANT FSLN WEAKNESS. IF GUERRILLA ATTACKS WERE WIDESPREAD THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, EVEN IF BY SMALL GROUPS, AND IF THEY WERE ABLE TO INVOLVE ANTI-GON SYMPATHIZERS, THE CAPACITY OF THE GON TO MAINTAIN ORDER COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY STRAINED AND, OUTSIDE OF MANAGUA, MIGHT BE FORCED TO FALL BACK INTO A POSITION OF SELF DEFENSE.

5. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT, WITHIN OUR INSTRUCTIONS, EMB HAS BEEN URGING THE GON AND THE RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION TO TAKE INITIATIVES TOWARD PROMOTING A POLITICAL DIALOGHWHICH WOULD DEFUSE THE POTENTIAL FOR SIGNIFICANT VIOLENCE. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THESE EFFORTS ARE BEGINNING TO PGODUCE SOME RETHINKING OF POSITION BY THE OPPOSITION, CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT THE FABRIC OF OPPOSITPON EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE ITSELF TO DIALOG AND THE GON-OPPOSITION CONTACTS REMAINS VERY FRAGILE AND INSUFFICIENT. A MAJOR FACTOR IN OPPOSITION INERTIA HAS BEEN THE CONTINUING EXPECTATION OF A MAJOR FSLN OFFENSEIVE AND THE OPPOSITION'S CONSEQUENT UNWILLINGNESS TO BE CAUGHT IN A DIALOG WITH SOMOZA WHEN THE ATTACKS MATERIALIZED. THUS, THE RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION HAS LARGELY DEFERRED TO THE FSLN TO PLAY OUT ITS POTENTIAL IN THE HOPE THAT IF SOMOZA WERE FORCED OUT OF POWER, A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERN2MENT COULD BE ESTABLISHED. IF THE FSLN OFFENSIVE SHOULD TAKE PLACE AND FAIL TO OUTST SOMOZAN, THE OPPOSITIONISTS MIGHT THEN BE MORE LIKELYHTO BE WILLING TO RETURN TO A POLITICAL DIALOG. HOWEVER, SOMOZA WOULD THEN FEEL STRONGER AND LESS LIKELY TO COMPROMISE.

6. VOMMENT: GON HAS VARIOUS POSSIBPLITIES TO THWART THE EFFORTS OF THE 12 TO REALIZE THEIR POTENTIAL FOR BEING THE FOCAL POINT OF CORRDIATED DISTURBANCES AND FSLN ATTWCKS. THE MOST LIKELY POSSIBPL2TIY IS TO TRY TO INTERFERE WPTH THE TIMING OF THE RETURN BY DELAYING ISSUANCE OF RE-ENTRY PERMITS IN CASES WHERE THEY HAVE EXPIRED, REFUSING LANDING RIGHTS IF DISTURBANCES AT THE AIRPORT APPEAR LIKELY, ETC. EMB ALSO BELIEVES THWT, EVEN THOUGH THE RETURN OF THE 12 REPRESENTS A POTENTIAL FOR SERIOUS DISTURBANCES, THE GON RETAINS THE CAPABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF FROM OVERTHROW.

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NOTE BY OCT: TELEGRAM DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, COMMUNIQUES, TERRORISTS, PERSONNEL TRAVEL
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MANAGU02661
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780245-0426
Format: TEL
From: MANAGUA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780677/aaaacnym.tel
Line Count: 119
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 68dd428c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 MANAGUA 2565
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2418265
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROBABLE DISTURBANCES RELATED TO RETURN OF THE 12
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOV, CS, NU, FSLN
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/68dd428c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014